

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A user interface on a display that enables perception of communications that leverage a chat platform, the user interface comprising:

5 a module for rendering a chat application user interface for a chat communications session involving at least a first chat participant and a second chat participant, the user interface being presented at a system display presented to the second chat participant;

10 a module for receiving a personalization item presented to the system display and associated with an individual chat user the personalization item corresponding to an identifier obtained by a second chat participant system, the identifier enabling identification of a personalization item of the individual chat user; and

a module for rendering the personalization item independently of a message used to obtain the identifier.

15 2. The user interface of claim 1 in which the individual chat user comprises the first chat participant.

20 3. The user interface of claim 1 in which the individual chat user comprises the second chat participant.

4. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item is rendered upon the occurrence of a change in a presence state of the individual chat user.

25 5. The user interface of claim 4 in which the individual chat user comprises the first chat participant.

6. The user interface of claim 4 in which the individual chat user comprises the second chat participant.

30 7. The user interface of claim 1 in which the identifier is obtained by receiving the identifier from a first chat participant system in a chat message.

5        8. The user interface of claim 1 in which the identifier is obtaining from a chat host system, the chat host system storing one or more identifiers associated with one or more personalization items for one or more chat users, the chat host system receiving an identity of the individual chat user and accessing an identifier associated with the individual chat user.

10       9. The user interface of claim 1 in which the identifier is obtained by retrieving the identifier from the second chat participant system.

10       10. The user interface of claim 1 in which the identifier is obtained by retrieving the identifier from a remote data store.

15       11. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises a graphic.

12. The user interface of claim 11 in which the graphic comprises an icon.

20       13. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises a sound.

14. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises wallpaper capable of being rendered on a chat application user interface.

25       15. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises an animation sequence.

30       16. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises a video segment.

17. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item comprises a customized item provided by the first chat participant.

5 18. The user interface of claim 1 in which personalization item comprises a personalization item provided by a third party.

19. The user interface of claim 18 in which the personalization item is enabled to be rendered in consideration of a payment.

10 20. The user interface of claim 1 in which the personalization item is configured to expire upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

15 21. The user interface of claim 18 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined length of time.

22. The user interface of claim 18 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined date.

20 23. The user interface of claim 18 in which the predetermined event comprises a predetermined number of uses.

24. A computer implemented method for enabling perception of a personalization item in a chat communications session, the method comprising:

25 storing on a host system one or more personalization items associated with a chat application operator;

receiving a request from a chat participant system for the personalization items associated with the chat application operator;

accessing the personalization items at the host system; and

30 communicating the personalization items from the host system to the chat participant system for rendering in a chat application running on the chat participant system.

25. The method of claim 24 in which receiving the request comprises:  
receiving an identifier enabling identification of a personalization item associated  
with the chat application operator.

5           26. The method of claim 24 in which receiving the request comprises receiving an  
identity of the chat participant; and  
accessing the personalization items comprises accessing the personalization items  
associated with the received identity.

10           27. The method of claim 25 in which receiving the identifier further comprises  
receiving an identifier comprising a location on the host system of the personalization  
item.

15           28. The method of claim 27 in which the identifier further comprises an item type  
and a data size.

20           29. The method of claim 27 wherein the identifier further comprises one or more of a  
custom item flag, an official item flag, a banned item flag, and a redirect to different item  
flag.

30           30. The method of claim 24 in which the host comprises a server authorized as a  
partner to a chat host.

25           31. The method of claim 24 in which storing the personalization items comprises  
storing a graphic.

32. The method of claim 31 in which the graphic comprises an icon.

30           33. The method of claim 24 in which storing the personalization items comprises  
storing a sound.

34. The method of claim 24 in which storing the personalization items comprises storing wallpaper capable of being rendered on a chat application user interface.

5 35. The method of claim 24 in which storing the personalization items comprises storing an animation sequence.

36. The method of claim 24 in which storing the personalization items comprises storing a video segment.

10 37. The method of claim 24 in which in which storing the personalization items comprises storing a personalization item configured to expire upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

15 38. The method of claim 37 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined length of time or the passage of a predetermined date.

39. The method of claim 37 in which the predetermined event comprises a predetermined number of uses.

20 40. The method of claim 37 further comprising:  
determining whether the personalization item has expired, and  
disallowing access to the personalization item if the personalization item has expired.

25 41. The method of claim 24 further comprising:  
determining whether the personalization item has been banned, and  
disallowing access to the personalization item if the personalization item has been banned.

30 42. The method of claim 24 further comprising creating an identifier for a personalization item based upon the application of an algorithm to at least a portion of data comprising the item.

43. The method of claim 42 further comprising determining if the personalization item is stored at the host system based upon the identifier; and, if the personalization item is stored at the host system, declining to redundantly store the personalization item at the host system.

44. The method of claim 43 further comprising determining whether the personalization item is an official item based upon the identifier; and displaying the personalization item if the personalization item is an official item.

45. A computer program stored on a computer readable medium, the computer program comprising instructions for:

storing on a host system one or more personalization items associated with a chat application operator;

receiving a request from a chat participant system for the personalization items associated with the chat application operator;

accessing the personalization items at the host system; and

communicating the personalization items from the host system to the chat participant system for rendering in a chat application running on the chat participant system.

46. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for receiving the request comprises instructions for receiving an identifier enabling identification of a personalization item associated with the chat application operator.

47. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for receiving the request comprises instructions for receiving an identity of the chat participant; and

instructions for accessing the personalization items comprises instructions for accessing the personalization items associated with the received identity.

48. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing a graphic.

49. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing a sound.

5        50. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing wallpaper capable of being rendered on a chat application user interface.

10       51. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing an animation sequence.

52. The computer program of claim 45 in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing a video segment.

15       53. The computer program of claim 45 in which in which instructions for storing the personalization items comprises instructions for storing a personalization item configured to expire upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

20       54. The computer program of claim 53 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined length of time or the passage of a predetermined date.

55. The computer program of claim 53 in which the predetermined event comprises a predetermined number of uses.

25       56. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium, the computer program comprising instructions for:

rendering, on a first chat participant system, a chat application user interface for a chat communications session involving at least an intended second chat participant and a first chat participant; and

rendering at the first chat participant system, a personalization item associated with the second chat participant prior to communication with the intended second chat participant system.

5           57. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system comprises instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system prior to communication of a chat message with the intended second chat participant system.

10           58. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system comprises instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system before a communications session is established with the intended second chat participant system.

15           59. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system comprises instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system before the first chat participant system sends a message to the intended second chat participant system.

20           60. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system comprises instructions for rendering at the first chat participant system before the first chat participant system receives a message from the intended second chat participant system.

25           61. The computer program of claim 56 further comprising instructions for:  
               associating the identifier with the personalization item;  
               obtaining the personalization item from a source other than a message used to obtain  
 the identifier; and  
               rendering the personalization item at the first chat participant system.

30



62. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the identifier comprises instructions for:

    sending an identity of the intended second chat participant to a chat host system, the chat host system storing one or more identifiers associated with one or more

5      personalization items for the intended second chat participant; and

    receiving an identifier associated with the individual intended second chat participant in a message from the chat host system.

63. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the  
10      identifier comprises instructions for locating the identifier at the intended second chat participant system.

64. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the identifier comprises instructions for retrieving the identifier from a remote data store.

65. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for:

    determining whether the personalization item associated with the received identifier is available at the first chat participant system;

20      retrieving the personalization item from the first chat participant system if the personalization item is available at the first chat participant system; and

    requesting the personalization item from a remote source and receiving the personalization item from the remote source at the first chat participant system if the personalization item is not available at the first chat participant system.

66. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining a graphic.

67. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the  
30      personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining a sound.

68. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining wallpaper capable of being rendered on a chat application user interface.

5           69. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining an animation sequence.

70. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining a video segment.

10

71. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining a customized binary object provided by the intended second chat participant.

15           72. The computer program of claim 56 in which instructions for obtaining the personalization item comprises instructions for obtaining a personalization item configured to expire upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

20           73. The computer program of claim 72 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined length of time or on passage of a predetermined date.

74. The computer program of claim 72 in which the predetermined event comprises a predetermined number of uses.

25           75. The computer program of claim 72 further comprising instructions for:  
determining whether the personalization item has expired, and  
disallowing display of the personalization item if the personalization item has expired.

30           76. The computer program of claim 56 further comprising instructions for:  
determining whether the personalization item has been banned, and

disallowing display of the personalization item if the personalization item has been banned.

77. A computer implemented method for enabling perception of personalization item in a chat communications session, the method comprising:

rendering, on a chat message recipient system, a chat application user interface for a chat communications session involving at least one instant message recipient and a chat message sender;

receiving a message that includes a text message and personalization item to be displayed by the second chat participant when perceiving the text message, the personalization item being selected by the instant message sender system; and

rendering the personalization item at the instant message recipient system when rendering another portion of the message.

78. The method of claim 77 in which receiving the message comprises receiving personalization item automatically selected by the instant message sender system.

79. The method of claim 77 in which receiving the message comprises receiving at least a portion of the personalization item in a chat message from a chat message sender system.

80. The method of claim 77 in which receiving the message comprises receiving at least a portion of the personalization item in a message generated upon a change in a presence state of the first chat participant.

81. The method of claim 77 in which receiving the message comprises receiving in the message at least a portion of personalization item provided by a host other than a chat message host.

82. The method of claim 81 in which receiving at least a portion of the personalization item comprises receiving at least a portion of a personalization item enabled to be rendered in consideration of a payment.

5           83. The method of claim 77 in which receiving the message comprises receiving at least a portion of personalization item configured to expire upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

84. The method of claim 83 in which the predetermined event comprises passage of a predetermined length of time or passage of a predetermined date.

10

85. The method of claim 83 in which the predetermined event comprises a predetermined number of uses.

86. The method of claim 83 further comprising:

15

determining whether the personalization item has expired based on determining whether the predetermined event has occurred, and  
disallowing display of the personalization item if the personalization item has expired.

20

87. The method of claim 77 further comprising:

determining whether the personalization item has been banned, and  
disallowing display of the personalization item if the personalization item has been banned.

25

88. The method of claim 87 in which determining whether the personalization item has been banned comprises determining whether the personalization item has been banned based on a report by a user.

30

89. The method of claim 87 in which determining whether the personalization item has been banned comprises determining whether the personalization item has been banned based on a violation of a term of service agreement.